

REMARKS

Claims 1-8 are now pending in the application. Minor amendments have been made to the specification and claims to simply overcome the objections to the specification and rejections of the claims under 35 U.S.C. § 112. The amendments to the claims contained herein are of equivalent scope as originally filed and, thus, are not narrowing amendments. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks contained herein.

SPECIFICATION

The specification stands objected to for certain informalities. While Applicants maintain that the original title of the invention is descriptive, Applicants have amended the title to: "INTERMEDIATE PRODUCT MANUFACTURING APPARATUS, AND MANUFACTURING METHOD". Therefore, reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection to the title are respectfully requested.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 1-8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Applicants maintain that the claims particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention and that one of ordinary skill in the art would be reasonably apprised of the scope of the invention. Further, Applicants

maintain that one of ordinary skill in the art would understand the terms “substantially in a carrying direction.”

However, Claims 1, 7, and 8 have been amended to recite that the plurality of processing means are arranged along the intra-process carrying means in a carrying direction of the intermediate products. Therefore, reconsideration and withdrawal of Claim 1-8 are respectfully requested.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Maydan et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 5,855,681). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 recites a manufacturing apparatus comprising a plurality of process modules for performing a plurality of processes and an inter-process carrying means. Each process module includes an intra-process carrying means and a plurality of processing means. The plurality of processing means are arranged along the intra-process carrying means in a carrying direction of the intermediate products at locations corresponding to an order of processes to be performed on the intermediate products. Maydan et al. fails to teach or suggest the manufacturing apparatus recite by claim 1.

Maydan et al. describes a processing system with process chambers. Maydan et al. Col. 12, Lines 19-28. While Maydan et al. mentions multiple process regions, the multiple process regions are not for performing a plurality of processes within a process module, as recited by claim 1. The same type of process is performed in each of the Maydan et al. process regions. The Maydan et al. process regions, as described, share gas sources and exhaust systems. Maydan et al., Abstract.

Maydan et al. is silent as to arranging a plurality of processing means along an intra-process carrying means in a carrying direction of intermediate products at locations corresponding to an order of processes to be performed on the intermediate products, as recited by claim 1. In other words, Maydan et al. is silent as to locations of processing means and fails to teach or suggest arranging processing means at locations corresponding to an order of processes to be performed, as recited by claim 1.

The manufacturing apparatus recited by claim 1 includes processing means arranged in a carrying direction of the intermediate products at locations corresponding to an order of processes. As supported by the specification, by arranging the processing means in this way, the carrying time of the intermediate product is shortened, the attachment of particles to the intermediate products is decreased, and lead time is reduced. Specification, Paragraph [0059].

For these reasons, Maydan et al. fails to teach or suggest each and every element of claim 1. Therefore, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested. With regard to claims 2-6, Applicants note that each either directly or indirectly depends from claim 1, which defines over the prior art as discussed above. Therefore, claims 2-6 also define over the prior art. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

Claim 7 recites a manufacturing method of manufacturing an intermediate product comprising a processing step of performing a plurality of processes by a plurality of processing means, respectively, in each process module, wherein the plurality of processing means are arranged along a carrying direction of the intermediate products at locations corresponding to an order of processes to be performed on the intermediate

products, without arranging the plurality of processing means for performing the same kinds of processes on the intermediate products in a group. Similar limitations are recited by claim 1. For at least the above reasons, claim 7 also defines over the prior art and reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

Claim 8 recites a manufacturing apparatus for manufacturing an intermediate product comprising a plurality of process modules for performing a plurality of processes and an inter-process carrying means. Each process module includes a plurality of processing means. The plurality of processing means are arranged along an intra-process carrying means in a carrying direction of the intermediate products at locations corresponding to an order of processes to be performed on the intermediate products. Similar limitations are recited by claim 1. For at least the above reasons, claim 8 also defines over the prior art and reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that all of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding rejections. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action and the present application is in condition for allowance. Thus, prompt and favorable consideration of this amendment is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (248) 641-1600.

Respectfully submitted,

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